



# California Regional Water Quality Control Board

## Los Angeles Region



**Winston H. Hickox**  
Secretary for  
Environmental  
Protection

Over 50 Years Serving Coastal Los Angeles and Ventura Counties  
Recipient of the 2001 *Environmental Leadership Award* from Keep California Beautiful

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### CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) REQUIREMENTS

The California Regional Water Quality Control Board, Los Angeles Region (hereinafter referred to as the Regional Board) is the Lead Agency for evaluating the environmental impacts of the proposed amendment to the *Water Quality Control Plan for the Los Angeles Region* (Basin Plan). The proposed amendment incorporates a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) plan to reduce bacteria to Santa Monica Bay (SMB) beaches during wet weather. The Secretary of Resources has certified the basin planning process as exempt from certain requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), including preparation of an initial study, negative declaration, and environmental impact report (California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 15251(g)). As the proposed amendment to the Basin Plan is part of the basin planning process, the environmental information developed for and included with the amendment is considered functionally equivalent to an initial study, negative declaration, and/or environmental impact report.

Any regulatory program of the Regional Board certified as functionally equivalent, however, must satisfy the documentation requirements of California Code of Regulations, title 23, section 3777(a) which requires the following:

- A written report providing:
  - a description of the proposed activity;
  - reasonable alternatives to the proposed activity; and
  - mitigation measures to minimize any significant adverse impacts.
- A completed environmental checklist that includes:
  - a checklist of environmental impacts;
  - a discussion of the environmental evaluation; and
  - a determination with respect to significant environmental impacts.

The attached checklist and Santa Monica Bay Beaches Wet-Weather Bacteria TMDL fulfill the requirements of section 3777, subdivision (a).

#### I. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The Basin Plan designates beneficial uses of waterbodies, establishes water quality objectives for the protection of these beneficial uses, and outlines a plan of implementation for maintaining and enhancing water quality. The proposed amendment would incorporate into the Basin Plan a TMDL to reduce bacteria at SMB beaches during wet weather. The Regional Board's goal in incorporating the above-mentioned TMDL is to reduce the risk of illness associated with swimming in marine waters contaminated with human sewage and other sources of bacteria. Swimming in waters with elevated bacteria densities has long been associated with adverse health effects. Local and national epidemiological studies compel the conclusion that there is a causal relationship between adverse health effects, such as gastroenteritis and upper respiratory illness, and recreational water quality, as measured by bacteria indicator densities.

Analysis of the extensive shoreline bacteriological monitoring data collected at SMB beaches has consistently shown that bacteria densities frequently exceed the Water Contact Recreation (REC-1) water

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quality objectives for protection of public health during wet weather. The Regional Board has prepared this TMDL to address the documented bacteriological water quality impairments at 44 beaches from the Los Angeles/Ventura County line, to the northwest, to Outer Cabrillo Beach, just south of the Palos Verdes Peninsula.

The TMDL establishes an 18-year plan for reducing the number of wet weather days that exceed REC-1 bacteriological objectives at SMB beaches such that (1) bacteriological water quality is as good as that of a “reference” beach (i.e., a beach with a largely natural drainage area) and (2) no degradation of existing water quality occurs. The purpose of this TMDL is to remove the human-generated (which includes both human sources of bacteria and human activities such as storm water conveyances that have concentrated natural sources of bacteria) bacteriological water quality impairments that prevent SMB beaches from supporting the REC-1 beneficial use. It involves holding municipalities within a subwatershed jointly accountable for exceedances of bacteria objectives from their storm drains, and encourages the use of a variety of methods to prevent these exceedances.

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<b>II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST</b>		
<b>1.</b>	<b>Earth. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Unstable earth conditions or in changes in geologic substructures?	No
	b. Disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcoming of the soil?	Maybe
	c. Change in topography or ground surface relief features?	No
	d. The destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?	No
	e. Any increase in wind or water erosion of soils, either on or off the site?	No
	f. Changes in deposition or erosion of beach sands, or changes in siltation, deposition or erosion which may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed of the ocean or any bay, inlet or lake?	Maybe
	g. Exposure of people or property to geologic hazards, such as earthquakes, landslides, mudslides, ground failure, or similar hazards?	No
<b>2.</b>	<b>Air. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Substantial air emissions or deterioration of ambient air quality?	No
	b. The creation of objectionable odors?	No
	c. Alteration of air movement, moisture or temperature, or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?	No
<b>3.</b>	<b>Water. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Changes in currents, or the course of direction or water movements, in either marine or fresh waters?	Maybe
	b. Changes in absorption rates, drainage patterns, or the rate and amount of surface water runoff?	Maybe
	c. Alterations to the course of flow of flood waters?	Maybe
	d. Change in the amount of surface water in any water body?	Maybe
	e. Discharge into surface waters, or in any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?	Yes
	f. Alteration of the direction or rate of flow of ground waters?	No

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	g. Change in the quantity or quality of ground waters, either through direct additions or withdrawals, or through interception of an aquifer by cuts or excavations?	No
	h. Substantial reduction in the amount of water otherwise available for public water supplies?	No
	i. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding or tidal waves?	No
<b>4.</b>	<b>Plant Life. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Change in the diversity of species, or number of any species of plants (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, microflora and aquatic plants)?	No
	b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of plants?	No
	c. Introduction of new species of plants into an area, or in a barrier to the normal replenishment of existing species?	No
	d. Reduction in acreage of any agricultural crop?	No
<b>5.</b>	<b>Animal Life. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Change in the diversity of species, or numbers of any species of animals (birds, land animals including reptiles, fish and shellfish, benthic organisms, insects or microfauna)?	No
	b. Reduction of the numbers of any unique, rare or endangered species of animals?	No
	c. Introduction of new species of animals into an area, or result in a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?	No
	d. Deterioration to existing fish or wildlife habitat?	No
<b>6.</b>	<b>Noise. Will the proposal result in:</b>	
	a. Increases in existing noise levels?	Maybe
	b. Exposure of people to severe noise levels?	No
<b>7.</b>	<b>Light and Glare. Will the proposal:</b>	
	a. Produce new light or glare?	No

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<b>8.</b>	<b>Land Use. Will the proposal result in:</b> a. Substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area?	Maybe
<b>9.</b>	<b>Natural Resources. Will the proposal result in:</b> a. Increase in the rate of use of any natural resources?  b. Substantial depletion of any nonrenewable natural resource?	No  No
<b>10.</b>	<b>Risk of Upset. Will the proposal involve:</b> a. A risk of an explosion or the release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to: oil, pesticides, chemicals or radiation) in the event of an accident or upset conditions?	No
<b>11.</b>	<b>Population. Will the proposal:</b> a. Alter the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?	No
<b>12.</b>	<b>Housing. Will the proposal:</b> a. Affect existing housing, or create a demand for additional housing?	No
<b>13.</b>	<b>Transportation/Circulation. Will the proposal result in:</b> a. Generation of substantial additional vehicular movement?  b. Effects on existing parking facilities, or demand for new parking?  c. Substantial impact upon existing transportation systems?  d. Alterations to present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods?  e. Alterations to waterborne, rail or air traffic?  f. Increase in traffic hazards to motor vehicles, bicyclists or pedestrians?	No  No  No  Maybe  No  No
<b>14.</b>	<b>Public Service. Will the proposal have an effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas:</b> a. Fire protection?  b. Police protection?  c. Schools?  d. Parks or other recreational facilities?	No  No  No  No

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	e. Maintenance of public facilities, including roads? f. Other governmental services?	Maybe Yes
<b>15.</b>	<b>Energy. Will the proposal result in:</b> a. Use of substantial amounts of fuel or energy? b. Substantial increase in demand upon existing sources of energy, or require the development of new sources of energy?	No No
<b>16.</b>	<b>Utilities and Service Systems. Will the proposal result in a need for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities:</b> a. Power or natural gas? b. Communications systems? c. Water? d. Sewer or septic tanks? e. Storm water drainage? f. Solid waste and disposal?	No No No Maybe Yes No
<b>17.</b>	<b>Human Health. Will the proposal result in:</b> a. Creation of any health hazard or potential health hazard (excluding mental health)? b. Exposure of people to potential health hazards?	No No
<b>18.</b>	<b>Aesthetics. Will the proposal result in:</b> a. The obstruction of any scenic vista or view open to the public? b. The creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to public view?	No No
<b>19.</b>	<b>Recreation. Will the proposal result in:</b> a. Impact upon the quality or quantity of existing recreational opportunities?	Yes
<b>20.</b>	<b>Archeological/Historical. Will the proposal:</b> a. Result in the alteration of a significant archeological or historical site structure, object or building?	No

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II. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST	
21.	<p><b>Mandatory Findings of Significance</b></p> <p><b>Potential to degrade:</b> Does the project have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?</p> <p><b>Short-term:</b> Does the project have the potential to achieve short-term, to the disadvantage of long-term, environmental goals? (A short-term impact on the environment is one which occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time, while long-term impacts will endure well into the future.)</p> <p><b>Cumulative:</b> Does the project have impacts which are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project may impact on two or more separate resources where the impact on each resource is relatively small, but where the effect of the total of those impacts on the environment is significant.)</p> <p><b>Substantial adverse:</b> Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?</p>
	<p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p> <p>No</p>

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### III. DISCUSSION OF ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

Expand on all “YES” and “MAYBE” answers given to the preceding questions in regard to environmental impacts. The evaluation shall consider whether the environmental impact indicated will have a substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the activity. In addition, the evaluation should discuss environmental effects in proportion to their severity and probability of occurrence. (Use additional pages if necessary.)

- 1. Earth. b.** Will the proposal result in disruptions, displacements, compaction or overcoming of the soil?

Answer: Maybe

Depending on the implementation strategy chosen, the proposal may result in soil excavation during construction of storage, diversion or treatment facilities for storm water.

- 1. Earth. f.** Will the proposal result in changes in deposition or erosion of beach sands, or changes in siltation, deposition or erosion which may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed of the ocean or any bay, inlet or lake?

Answer: Maybe

Depending on the implementation strategy chosen, the proposal may result in decreases in deposition and erosion of beach sands and a decrease in siltation of the bed of Santa Monica Bay if a portion of storm water is stored and diverted to treatment facilities, rather than discharging directly to the beach and subsequently the bay.

- 3. Water. a.** Will the proposal result in changes in currents, or the course of direction or water movements, in either marine or fresh waters?

Answer: Maybe

A change in fresh water movement may occur if compliance with the TMDL is achieved in part through diversion of storm water from open channels to waste water, or urban runoff, treatment facilities.

- 3. Water. b.** Will the proposal result in changes in absorption rates, drainage patterns, or the rate and amount of surface water runoff?

Answer: Maybe

Changes in drainage patterns and the rate and amount of surface water runoff may occur if a portion of storm water is diverted and/or captured and treated to achieve compliance with the TMDL.

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**3. Water. c.** Will the proposal result in alterations to the course of flow of flood waters?

Answer: Maybe

Depending on the implementation strategy chosen, the proposal may result in the diversion and storage of a portion of storm water, altering its current course of flow directly into the ocean.

**3. Water. d.** Will the proposal result in a change in the amount of surface water in any water body?

Answer: Maybe

A change in the amount of surface water in waterbodies may occur if compliance with the TMDL is achieved by diverting a portion of storm water runoff to waste water, or urban runoff, treatment facilities.

**3. Water. e.** Will the proposal result in discharge to surface waters, or in any alteration of surface water quality, including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen, or turbidity?

Answer: Yes

A change in the quality of surface water will occur when the TMDL is implemented by controlling sources of bacteria in surface runoff and/or treating dry weather runoff and storm water runoff. This will positively impact recreational beneficial uses of surface waters, including water contact and non-contact recreation.

**6. Noise. a.** Will the proposal result in increases in existing noise levels?

Answer: Maybe

Depending on the implementation strategy chosen, the proposal may result in increases in existing noise levels, particularly in the case of construction of storage, diversion or treatment facilities for storm water.

**8. Land Use. a.** Will the proposal result in substantial alteration of the present or planned land use of an area?

Answer: Maybe

Depending on the implementation strategy chosen, the proposal may result in alteration of the present or planned land use of an area to provide land for storage, diversion or treatment facilities for storm water.

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**13. Transportation/Circulation. d.** Will the proposal result in alterations to present patterns of circulation or movement of people and/or goods?

Answer: Maybe

Depending on the implementation strategy chosen, the proposal may result in temporary alterations to present traffic patterns during construction of storm water diversion or treatment facilities.

**14. Public Service. e.** Will the proposal have an effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas? Maintenance of public facilities, including roads?

Answer: Maybe

The proposal may result in the need for increased maintenance of public facilities and, specifically, storm water diversion facilities or structural best management practices (BMPs).

**14. Public Service. f.** Will the proposal have an effect upon, or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas? Other government services?

Answer: Yes.

The proposal will result in the need for increased bacteriological monitoring at SMB beaches to track compliance with the TMDL.

**16. Utilities and Service Systems. d.** Will the proposal result in a need for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities: sewer or septic tanks?

Answer: Maybe.

In order to achieve compliance with the TMDL, sewer systems and septic tank systems that affect water quality at SMB beaches may need to be upgraded and/or adequately maintained.

**16. Utilities and Service Systems. e.** Will the proposal result in a need for new systems, or substantial alterations to the following utilities: storm water drainage?

Answer: Yes.

In order to achieve compliance with the TMDL, storm water drainage systems may need to be upgraded to divert and/or capture and treat a portion of storm water that affects water quality at SMB beaches.

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**19. Recreation. a.** Will the proposal result in an impact on the quality or quantity of existing recreational opportunities?

Answer: Yes.

Implementation of the TMDL will have a positive impact on the quality and quantity of recreational opportunities by reducing the number of days that exceed bacteriological water quality objectives at SMB beaches.

Many of the environmental impacts listed above are “positive” impacts, while the majority of adverse impacts are limited, short-term impacts, which may be necessary to achieve the long-term environmental benefits of the TMDL. The implementation of this TMDL will result in better water quality and a reduction in the risk of illness and associated health costs imposed on the significant population that recreates at SMB beaches.

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment could not have a significant effect on the environment.

I find that the proposed Basin Plan amendment could have a significant adverse effect on the environment. However, there are feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures that would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact. These alternatives are discussed in the attached written report.

I find the proposed Basin Plan amendment may have a significant effect on the environment. There are no feasible alternatives and/or feasible mitigation measures available which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impacts. See the attached written report for a discussion of this determination.

DATE: August 1, 2002

Original Signed By

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Dennis A. Dickerson  
Executive Officer

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